

RECKLESS RALPH'S

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP



A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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A DIME NOVEL GRADUATE

Nowadays many of the younger generation are apt to consider as the acme of perfection, their own habits, mode of living, dress and—(I was about to say achievements, but unfortunately, due to no fault of their own, some do not achieve very much.) They look upon the period in which they happen to live as the "smartest ever"; I presume we thought the same way in our youth; they reflect upon the "horse and buggy days" with disdain. Although we, of the older generation, appreciate and enjoy many of the changed methods and inventions and would not be without them, still we do find a lot of pleasure in reminiscing back to the "h. & b. days," and even to periods which, in some parts of the west, antedate those days. This refers to the Pony Express, Stage Coach and Covered Wagon days.

Although the Pony Express had written its last chapter before the advent of clear recollection of possibly the oldest inhabitant of today, tales of the exploits of these fearless riders and of personal contacts with them were still of common occurrence. Also the Stage Coach and Covered Wagon had made their final trips so far as trans-continental journeys were concerned, although they were yet in evidence locally here and there. The new era had been ushered in—that of the railroad. Several lines had been laid across the country and others were under construction, often racing with one another in an excited effort to be the first to reach some newly discovered gold fields or the place of some

new opening of government lands for settlement.

What boy of this wonderful period of fifty years ago was not an ardent reader of so-called "Dime Novel" literature? What boy was not thrilled with the stories of "Deadwood Dick," "Nick Carter," "Wild Bill," "Buffalo Bill" and "Jesse James"? Of course, parents did not always approve of such reading and much of it had to be done in attics, woodsheds or behind some convenient haystack, in order to save the book from the kitchen stove if mother go hold of it, or to protect dad's morals if he captured it. Whether or not such stories did much good or harm, is a moot question. Many grown-ups of today will say they did them no harm. It is safe to say that every boy reader was thrilled with the idea of becoming a great detective; of finding his fortune in the glorious west by seeking hidden treasures in rugged mountains; or by becoming a plains' scout hero or a brave Indian fighter. Doubtless the number who actually saw even a small part of their dreams come true was very small.

Among these few, and in a small way, too, was the writer. He did not actually kill any Indians, although he sat around camp fires with them—also hidden atop a haystack with a companion, both armed, he did watch for redskin marauders during the night; he did not become a plains' scout, but he did do some broncho riding, (experienced the thrill of being bucked off, too); he did not make a fortune in mining, although he did find employment in mining gold, and

among other duties, helped to make real gold bricks; he did not meet any "Deadwood Dicks" or "Wild Bills," but did mingle with a milder class of such characters, and, as a cowboy, used a saddle which formerly belonged to a horse thief, who had been caught and disposed of in the usual conventional western way of the time.

All this by way of introduction, not as self-appraisal or boasting, but simply to give some semblance of authenticity to the narrative. Many stories could be told of these interesting and varied experiences which in a great measure were the result of youthful reading, but only one will be related in detail.

After a season of wild ranch life, cow punching and plains roving, sometimes not seeing a sod shack or other sign of human habitation for days, in an isolated section of North Dakota, near the Canadian border, (incidentally where the "Mounties" thrive who are credited with always "getting their man," but where there was one man they "did not get," but that is another story): — in this section, far removed from railroad telegraph and even mail communication, the happy lot came to accompany a trainload of cattle to market. Tales of the herding, rounding up, branding and separating the fit from the unfit, could be told; also of many novel and thrilling happenings incident to ranch life; but the one that vividly stands out in memory is that of marketing, commencing with the long tedious trek to the distant railroad station and continuing with the sleepless, tiresome trip from the far western plains to the stockyards and markets of the central west.

The cowboy, who of necessity spends the greater part of his time away from civilization and far removed from the influences of society, enjoys to its fullest extent the life of ease and freedom to which he has grown accustomed; yet, there cling to his memory reminiscences of earlier days — if an alien to the place of his present residence, as most of them are, — and he constantly cherishes the desire for an opportunity to visit the friends and familiar scenes of his youth. If born and reared on the prairies, he likewise has an inborn desire to visit the wonderful east and witness for himself some of the sights so vividly depicted in the "picture magazines" of the day. The forerunners of present day literature which reached isolated cow camps were the "Police Gazette," "Dime Novels," mail order catalogs

and the weekly "Bazoo" or "Bugle" from the nearest town. An occasional visit to the local metropolis, while affording abundant opportunity for having what the average cowboy considered a good time, i. e.; plenty of "red eye," a dance hall, vulgar variety show, and perhaps a shooting scrape or two, did not satisfy his desire to mingle with real "tenderfeet" and show them of what kind of stuff a western cow-puncher is made.

The opportunity for an inexpensive trip east comes to him at cattle-shipping time. The ranchman is never at a loss for men to accompany the shipment; his men are anxious to go and often draw lots in order that all may have an equal chance to take advantage of the privilege. The fortunate puncher who's next turn it is, plans long in advance for the royal time he is to have, what he will do and how he will astonish his friends with blood-curdling tales of wild life and daring experiences, finally returning to his fellows with stories of wonders of the east and general good times had.

On the trip in question, the experiences were made up of commonplace occurrences to the average puncher, but were fraught with many unusual and interesting situations to one less familiar with that side of life. Three or four of the wildest and wooliest on the ranch were among the party on this trip. Among them were Poll-Angus Pete, Buckskin Billy, Shorthorn Charley, Swearin' Jack — the surname of a cowboy scarcely ever is heard. When the day came, the marketable beeves, previously separated from the general herd, were started on the long drive to the railroad station, about forty miles. The driving was slow, in order to prevent loss of weight. The cattle were permitted to meander along, cropping the grass here and there, only continuing the forward march when urged by galloping, swearing cowpunchers, kept busy riding in a zigzag course and constantly pushing the cattle on. Occasionally a steer would break through the lines and start back on a wild run for the familiar range; the faithful broncho, however, with spurs plunged deeply into his already bleeding sides, was always successful in overtaking the fugitive after a lively chase, and returning it to the herd. A too unruly steer was quickly quieted by shooting off a horn by an accurate shot from a trusty "Colts." The riding was hard on the bronchos and frequently fresh mounts were needed

from the relay supply which accompanied the outfit. When night came a halt was made, camp fire lighted, food and blankets procured from the mess wagon and cattle permitted to rest. After supper the night watch was established. Those who were fortunate to escape the first shift lost no time in wrapping up in blankets, and were soon in the "land of Nod" under the canopy of the starry sky, saddles serving as pillows and the sod beneath, of doubtful softness, as mattresses. None found it difficult to persuade Morpheus to come along and all was quiet, until some hours later when we were rudely awakened by loud commands to "get up and be quick about it" as it was time to change watch. Clouds gathered, adding to the blackness of the night, a light rain was falling and the use of "yellow slickers" (oil coats) by all, whether on duty or trying to sleep. However, the rain had the effect of driving the mosquitoes to cover, which had been so unbearable that many carried branches to keep the insects from faces of horses and men. At supper time a smudge was built permitting the smoke to blow over the group and ward off the attacks of the pests. The animals, too, were quick to sense this form of preventive, and eagerly collected along the line of the wafting smoke. At daylight all was astir, breakfast was prepared,—black coffee, "sowbelly" and dry bread; (with thousands of cows, no milk, and no fresh meat.)

At loading point, a final night's rest was given the cattle and men. Next morning cars were loaded to "standing room only" capacity, in order to keep the stock from lying down or being thrown down by the jolting of the train; once down it is impossible for them to rise and death by being trampled upon is almost sure. Usually the men, unless they succumb to the fascinating temptations of the green cloth or the snares of the wily dive-keeper, are in happy spirits with well-filled purses, with the full intention of spending every cent in their possession. On this occasion we were treated not only to a surprise, but to something new in the way of wedding ceremonies and honeymoon tours. Fancy Fanny, the comely second cook at the ranch and one of the only two women for miles around, unknown to us had gone to town on the once-a-week stage the day ahead of us and was waiting for the caravan. Her "Lochinvar" was among the eastbound punchers, and great was our surprise

at being invited to the marriage ceremony of Fancy Fanny and Poll-An-gus Pete. Into the hotel parlor we went, high-heeled boots, jingling spurs, fringed chaps, sombreros and here and there a dangling "miniature cannon," waiting for the magic words "man and woman," as the equally picturesque J. P. put it. This slight error met with no objection from the contracting parties or witnesses; doubtless no one noticed it. The elaborate (?) wedding supper, as the newspaper had it, consisted of "embalmed beef" and other canned goods, with the usual accompaniments of wet goods from the adjoining bar. The only female participants were the bride and the hotel keeper's wife, who meanwhile turned the culinary duties over to the stable boy. After supper, the fiddler, one of whom there is to be found in every locality, arrived with his tuneless instrument and the dining room was cleared of tables and chairs and a general invitation sent out for all to come and trip the light fantastic toe, eat, drink and be merry at Pete's expense; ere long the place was filled, but the demand for feminine partners far exceeded the supply. Fancy Fanny was declared to be the sweetest bride who had ever honored the town with her presence, and Pete a real "jolly good fellow."

And now comes the peculiar part of the wedding incident. For ages, at least since the advent of the railroad, it has been the custom for bridal parties to take honeymoon trips. Pete was in entire sympathy with the idea, but from ignorance, lack of experience of motives of economy, he concluded to take the tour alone, sending his bride back to the ranch to await his return.

Once aboard the capoose on the rear of the train, the journey was commenced, but not one of ease and comfort as confronts a Pullman car passenger. With us it was continual watchfulness until our living freight was finally disposed of at the stock center. Not only was it necessary to be on the alert during the day, but our nights on the swinging, jolting capoose were wakeful in order that we might be on hand to render service to the helpless animals in crowded cars ahead. Although due consideration is given to the quick movement of cattle trains, our trip on this "live stock express" was tedious, and when the thousand mile trip was at an end, the sturdiest cowboy, so used to hard life and exposure, had enough railroading to satisfy him for some time to come.

Before boarding the train each had been provided with a lantern and a ten-foot pole; into the end of the latter a long spike had been driven and the end filed to a sharp point. Whenever the train made a stop, day or night, we were expected to run along the side of the train looking for any critter that had lain or fallen down, and force such to standing position by diligent use of the spiked pole. When the whistle blew the starting signal, we would climb to the top of the most convenient car and cautiously make our way back to the caboose, slowly indeed, for a cowboy is entirely out of his element on the running board of a fast moving freight train.

En route the cattle were unloaded at feeding points for water, food and rest. The reloading was more difficult than in the first instance, the stock revolting against returning to their traveling quarters. At St. Paul a portion of the stock was disposed of, and a tough appearance we must have presented, as we were refused accommodations at different third-class hotels, having been politely informed that "the house is full." We fell in with a lot of drovers, roustabouts and "side-door-Pullman" travelers and found friendly berths on the benches, counters and floor of an old freight office, where we passed a restless night, the snorings of a dozen or more men being unbearable, tired as we were.

In the morning we made an early start to Chicago, and happy we were when the stock was off of our hands. A barber shop demanded first attention, where locks were trimmed, faces denuded of bristles, shampoo and all accessories of a tonsorial parlor, including bath, something unusual except an occasional swim in the river. Next to a "one-price, low-price, fit guaranteed or money back" clothing store, and arrayed in new togery from head to foot they were ready for all the sights of the big city. Two or three days of pleasure and dissipation sufficed, after which the group separated, each departing for the town of his birth to mingle with friends and acquaintances of boyhood days.

A sojourn of a week or two was sufficient to satiate their desires and homesickness overcame them. The old places were not what they had been, surroundings changed and many friends gone. With their few remaining dollars, or perhaps borrowed money, return tickets to the west were purchased, to the familiar scenes of their wild yet quiet life, with a

feeling of having had an abundance of sight-seeing for some time to come. Especially was Pete in happy spirits as he started on his journey, the conclusion of his solo honeymoon, with Fanny patiently waiting for him at the other end.

I shall always cherish with most pleasant recollections the interesting reminiscences of the time spent among the com-punchers and broncho busters — as good-natured and kind-hearted set of men as are to be found anywhere, although a little wild and reckless at times, — and the exciting homeward journey on the rear of the "Live Stock Express."

May 13th, 1938.

J. H. Ambruster,

1458 Pensacola Ave., Chicago, Ill.

THE AUTHOR WHO LIVED WHAT HE WROTE By John Hix

Sent in by Wm. J. Benners, courtesy Philadelphia Ledger.

NED BUNTLINE—Originator of the "Dime Novel" Thrillers, himself ran away to sea, served in three wars, started two riots, was jailed twice and actually hanged once; also organized the political party of "Know-Nothings" was married four times, and was in fifteen or more shooting scrapes, and carried twenty bullets in his body, then turned to writing sensational fiction, 1823-1886.

A man who lived as he wrote and wrote as he lived was Edward Zane Carroll Judson, better known as Ned Buntline. He was one of the first of the dime novelists, he invented and perfected that technique twelve years ago, before it was popularized by the firm of Beadle & Adams. Born in New York State in 1823, Ned Buntline ran away to sea when a youngster and became a cabin boy. At fifteen he won a midshipman's commission in the U. S. Navy for heroism displayed when a boat capsized in the East River on Feb. 10, 1838. Four years later he resigned to serve in the Seminole Indian War. Singlehanded, Buntline once captured two murderers and was rewarded \$600.00. In 1846 at Nashville, Tenn., he was arranged for the shooting of one Robert Porterfield, with whose wife Buntline was alleged to have flirted. Porterfield's brother opened fire on him in the court room; after a wild cross town chase he was seized, jailed, then lynched. His neck was broken, but he lived; some one cut him down and smuggled him back to jail. He was not indicted. Buntline later served in the Mexican War; was

jailed one year for starting a riot in New York's Astor Place Theatre; started an election riot in St. Louis in 1852, but escaped by jumping bail. Buntline it was who nicknamed William F. Cody, Buffalo Bill and made a national hero of him in his dime novels. After many more eventful escapades, Buntline settled in his Adirondack home and devoted himself to his writing. During his life he produced the equivalent of 200 volumes of Dime Novels, etc., and once wrote a 610-page book in 37 hours.

"THE GOLDEN LIBRARY"

By E. T. Gossett

Cerro Gordo, Ill.

One of the libraries published during the latter '80s, and which doesn't seem to be given much attention by collectors, was "The Golden Library," published by Albert Sibley & Co., 18 Rose Street, New York. Some catalogues mention it only briefly, while others ignore it altogether. An occasional copy is found among collections, but there seems to be no definite attempt at making a collection of them.

The library was of a much milder type of juvenile stories, which probably accounts for the lack of interest in it. The publishers boasted of its mildness, a part of their announcement stating: "Juvenile literature of the demoralizing kind only have been sold on news stands at cheap prices. The Golden Library comes to the rescue of a long suffering community."

The title of the stories, and the style of the text, reminded one very much of the Horatio Alger stories, although so far as known, none of the Alger writings ever appeared in this library. Some of the titles were: "One Cent Capital," "Bound to Win," "Working His Way," "Barefoot Ben," "Camp and Canoe," etc.

Despite the publisher's attempt to "Come to the rescue of a long long-suffering community," the library only survived two and a half years. Its first issue was dated October 1, 1886, and the last on April 1, 1889. It was published semi-monthly, on the 1st and 15th of the month, and according to the best authorities, 61 issues were put out.

In format, the library was 6x8½, printed on slightly heavier stock than were most of the libraries of that time, and its 64 pages were bound in a heavy orange colored cover. The library contained from two or three to around a dozen of the old wood cut engravings, and sold for ten cents per

copy. The heavier stock used and the protective cover, together with the small size of the library, probably accounts for the generally good condition of the few copies of them which have come to the writer's notice.

So far as known, this library was the only publication put out by Albert Sibley & Co. although according to Charles Bragin's "Bibliography of Dime Novels," there was a Camp Fire Library published by the Camp Fire Publishing Co., at 18 Rose Street, New York, in 1887-88, during the time The Golden Library was published at the same address. However, publishers at that time had the cheerful habit of changing the names of their concerns or publications at will, so it is not certain whether both were put out by the same house or not.

Publishers of that period seemed to feel that the use of the word "Golden" in their titles, held some magic power, and most of them used it if it would fit in. There was the Golden Hours, published by Norman L. Munro; The Golden Days, published by James Elverson; The Golden Weekly published by Frank Tousey; The Golden Argosy, published by Frank Munsey, and The Golden Library, published by Albert Sibley & Co.

M. E. Marsh, 812 N. Cayuga St., Ithaca, N. Y., passed away July 21st, also Charles Welton of Waterbury, Conn. (Glastonbury) who died several months ago. Don't know exact date. Both good fellows, and both have gone to the great beyond. God Bless Them.

EDITORIAL

Wm. M. Claggett, new address, 1431 Hubbard St., Jacksonville, Florida, was hurt in an automobile accident, when his car crashed through a platform and fell 40 feet. Bill is sure having some tough luck, as he was badly smashed up, nearly a year ago in an automobile accident.

Eli A. Messier, 117 Morton Ave., Woonsocket, R. I., was up to see me Aug. 9th, and Michael Corcoran, Oak St., Shrewsbury, Mass., was down Aug. 10th, and Aug. 11th, Raymond L. Caldwell, 835 Highland Ave., Lancaster, Pa., was up to see me, and it sure is fine to see all the fellows, I'll say. I'm not feeling any too good yet, but am in hopes of feeling better. If the Roundup is late for two or three months, don't worry any, as I'll get it out, as sometimes it's better late than never. I expect to go back with Ray Caldwell, when he leaves for home, back to Billie Benner's again, as I just

received a card that he's very sick. I think it's the weather that's making everybody sick nowadays.

Reckless Ralph Cummings.

Partial list of all the 1938 members of Happy Hours Brotherhood. The only Dime Novel Brotherhood in America:

8. Lacey D. Irwin, Box 117, Kane, Ill.
22. Frank T. Fries, 519 Church Street, Orrville, Ohio.
90. John S. Ranlett, Rockville, Maine. (New Member.)
91. Wm. H. Gander, P. O. Box 60, Transcona, Man., Canada. (New Member.)
92. Robert L. Bickford, Newport, Vt. (New Member.)
93. George E. Mostacello, 2714 Bainbridge Ave., Bronx, N. Y. (New Member.)
94. C. N. Sauter, 243 Summit Street, Marion, Ohio. (New Member.)
95. Howard Fahrer, 785-787 St. Paul St., Rochester, N.Y. New Member.
96. P. M. Gulick, 229 W. 43rd St., New York, N. Y. (New Member.)

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See his list in Dime Novel Roundup, for March, 1938

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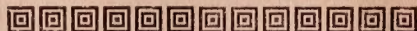
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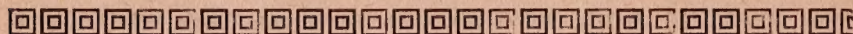
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